

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, November 15, 1899

Beinn Bhreagh, Victoria County, Cape Breton, N.S. November 15. 1899. My dear Alec,

I am very sorry to have to report that the sky. being heavily overcast, it was impossible to see your stars last night. I am sorry because I wanted to see them because you were so anxious that I should, and because now we shall have to sit up again, and Oh dear it is so hard to care twopence for any thing in heaven above or the earth beneath at four oclock in the morning. I got along very well last night until three o'clock because my new book on Dryfus, Steeven's "The Tragedy of Dryfus" had just come and proved so exciting that I could not stop until I had finished it. That was at three, then the minutes dragged heavily. I went out on the verandahs both north and south, read my book over again, then at half past four decided that I could watch the sky as well from my morning room sofa, and lay down dressed as I was. I watched the sky at intervals until daylight came, and then went to bed with the clear consciousness of o ne who has done her whole duty under trying circumstances. I find that the whole household was up at intervals trying in vain to see Mr Bell's stars, and have something to crow about over all the people who wont get such a sight again. Elsie reports a lively dis s cussion in the pantry , Charles informing Maria that the stars go on shooting all day today, does she really suppose that they keep watct of the earth's time and only shoot between four and six, and Maria maintaining her point unconvinced. Charles declares she may get up at four if she likes, he will have a good night's sleep shooting stars or not. I privately approve of Charles sentiments but of course will try once more, although with the same want of success, I am afraid. It was a beautiful cloudless morning at ten oclock, when I sent Elsie on hores-back to enquire after Rory, and she has just come back at four to report cold high winds , and the clouds are settling down heavily.

Library of Congress

Now I have a piece of news for you. Mr McInnis came over this morning to ask if we wanted to sell Cresent Grove, that the Postmaster of Baddeck had written him that "aparty from Boston wanted to buy the place, and he wanted to know if I would sell it." As Mr McInnis did not know who the "party" was, I said that my willingness to sell would depend upon who he was, and also what he wanted the place for. If satisfied on those points I would go so far as to s say that we were open to an offer. Then Mr McInnis said that he had long desired to buy Gresent Grove sometime as a home for himself and his family when he left us. I made no remark at the time, but later returning to it, asked him if he really wanted to buy. 1st H e laughed and said he couldnt afford it. Before th at he had said that the McInnis' who owned the land back of our place wanted to sell, and he thought that with their land there would be a nice farm at Cresent Grove. Latter he said that he had often lately thought if he were to be sick and unable to work, there was absolutely no place to which he and his family could go, and he felt he would like to get a home for them somewhere. Ye s , he had saved at little money in the years he had been with us , but not much. Now why couldnt we give him the land? You spoke last spring of wanting to do something for him, this is a thing that he seems to really want. For me, I have wanted to hold on to the place partly from old association's sake, but much more because so long as we had a place to offer them, I felt some hope of getting Grace and Charlie here. And for that reason I dont want to sell Cresent Grove. If we gave it to Mr McInnis , he would not want to live in it yet , so that Charlie could have the house just the same, and Mr McInnis would have the comfort of knowing that he had the home re a dy when he or his family it. It seems these he fell himself a very strong man or one likely to be long lived. He told me that during his last illness when you were in camp he was really frightened about himself for a short time , he had such pain and difficulty in breathing..

I wish that you could see my clay. I have two pieces , one of each kind. I cant get the stove hot enough to bake them, but the difference between the two kinds is wonderful. My piece from the road clay is made with the first unstrained clay, the one full of all the foreign matter and impurities. It is never the less exquisitely fine grained and is drying a pale

Library of Congress

greenish gray color that is exactly the color the clay has in the porcelain manufactories I have visited , Sevres for instance. The piece of clay modelled with Frank's so far keeps its purple pink color. Daisy is hard at work on her wireless telegraphy. She seems to be diving deeply into the subject, and when I last enquired was struggling with the t and k of Hertz' experiments. Is the Hertz of the waves the Hertz of the Legion of Honor and the Panama scandals? I hope not.

Please excuse the mistakes in this letter. After spilling the type-writer on the floor and breaking certain, fortunately, unimportant parts of its anatomy, yesterday, in my efforts to get a better light, I do not dare to remove it from the table, and write almost by memory of where the letters ought to be.